



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Why concert promoters matter

Citation for published version:

Brennan, M & Webster, E 2011, 'Why concert promoters matter' Scottish Music Review, vol 2, no. 1, pp. 1-25.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Scottish Music Review

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Brennan, M., & Webster, E. (2011). Why concert promoters matter. Scottish Music Review, 2(1), 1-25

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Why Concert Promoters Matter

Matt Brennan

Research Assistant, Live Music Project, University of Edinburgh

Emma Webster

PHD Student, Live Music Project, University of Glasgow

Forming a companion piece to Frith's 2007 article on why live music matters, this paper argues that there is a need to refine accounts of the music industries to reflect live music's growing dominance. It does so by focusing on the rock/pop concert promoter and posits that in contrast to traditional definitions, the role of the promoter is astonishingly flexible and adaptable. The authors argue that the promoter necessarily 'wears many hats' and offer three promotional models to understand the work that promoters do. To illustrate this and to understand the development of live music promotion in the UK from 1955 onwards, the article compares and contrasts historical research with contemporary ethnography.

Introduction

News headlines announcing a 'crisis' in the recording industry have been commonplace since the beginning of the 21st century, but 2008 and 2009 saw the first reports of another watershed: Britons spent more on live music concert tickets in 2008 than they did on recorded music (CDs and downloads combined), making the live industry the largest source of revenue in the British music industries (Prynn, 2008; *Music Week*, 17 March 2009).¹ In fact, live music has always been an important consideration for popular music and its related industries, and yet it has been surprisingly neglected in research, which has tended to privilege the recording industry, or indeed, imply that the 'music industry' is synonymous with the recording industry (we will therefore be referring to the 'music industries' in plural for the remainder of this article).² There is now a clear need to challenge and refine existing record-industry based accounts of music as a creative industry (Frith, 2007). Even in academic scholarship of popular music, research on live music has tended to focus either on artists (in performance) or audiences (in participation), rather than on the necessary elements that allow these two groups to assemble together for a live music event. Our concern here, then, is to lay the groundwork for an understanding of live music as an industry, the result of a production process in which the commodity—the concert, broadly defined—is the result of the activities of a particular kind of entrepreneur, the concert promoter.

This article presents research from an ongoing project designed to investigate the activity of concert promoters in Britain since 1955 and to develop a more sophisticated and nuanced explanation of their position in the music industries than previous attempts.³ It uses two contrasting methodologies, historical research and ethnography, as it is important in this initial study to bring together these different ways of understanding the promoter's role. Historically, as we will show, this has changed according to

changing opportunities; one of the defining characteristics of successful promoters is their adaptability to changing musical, social and cultural circumstances. Promoters embody a highly complex value relationship between musicians, audiences, agents, record companies and other music media and to appreciate this we also need the kind of detailed material on their everyday institutional practice, the kind of detailed insight into promoters' perception of their relationships, that only ethnography can provide. Drawing on these approaches we will propose three models of promotion as a basis for further research. Later in the article we will provide a summary of historical research that draws on both archival work and interviews with key historical figures. It covers the period from 1955 to 1966 in the UK, showing the development of the live music industry and the promotional methods used during a period when the British live music sector was undergoing significant changes in response to (and as an aspect of) the emergence of rock. To compare and contrast this period with the present day, we will then present ethnographic research focusing on contemporary promoters and venue bookers.

Our first task is to clarify what we mean by a concert promoter.⁴ Dave Laing writes that: 'the term 'promoter' is widely used in the music industry to describe the person or company responsible for the physical organisation and presentation of a concert or festival', which can be taken as the minimum requirement for what a promoter does (Laing, 2003, p. 561). Keith Negus fleshes out this definition by describing some of the tasks a promoter may be responsible for, including 'hiring venues, arranging stages, sorting out public address systems and lighting, employing caterers and security personnel, advertising the show and coordinating the sale of tickets' (Negus, 1992, p. 130). The promoter in both of these definitions is the person organising the technicalities of the show, and all that that entails, a view echoed in various music industry guides (Passman, 2004; Charles, 2004; Field, 2004; Beattie, 2007; Reynolds, 2008), and industry organisation (National Music Council, 2002) and government reports (Competition Commission, 2007). It is also the promoter who has responsibility 'for ensuring the safety of both the public and the artist during the course of the gig and for conforming with licensing regulations' (Music Managers Forum, 2003, p. 23). Added to this, it is promoters who (theoretically, at least) bear the brunt of the financial, social and personal risk of promoting a show; they are the people hiring the acts and the venue for an event in a gamble that may or may not pay off. 'Promoters take nearly all of the financial risk in organising a tour or concert, usually guaranteeing artists a minimum income from events. Their role includes costing events and tours, and booking venues' (Competition Commission, 2007, p. 13).

From these accounts it is clear that a promoter's role is simple to define but complicated to describe. A live event happens because someone—a promoter—brings together performer and audience in a given space at a given time, and generally does so in a commercial transaction (musicians are paid to perform, audiences pay to hear them) that the promoter organises and plans to profit from. But the number of things that must happen for an event to take place can be extremely varied (and expensive) and it is this institutional complex to which 'the live music industry' refers. The live music industry is the professionalised network that exists to stage a certain level of live music events. It includes professional agents, promoters, tour managers, sound engineers, crew, ticketing companies, transportation companies and so forth. This industry may have little or no bearing on a sizeable proportion of do-it-yourself or amateur live music events that routinely occur in the UK but neither are these events completely irrelevant to the way in which the live music industry works. Even as we become familiar with the money-making strategies of new global promotional companies like Live Nation, the small-scale enterprise of idealistic (and/

or decidedly shady) entrepreneurs at a local level remains equally significant for an understanding of the live music sector as a whole.

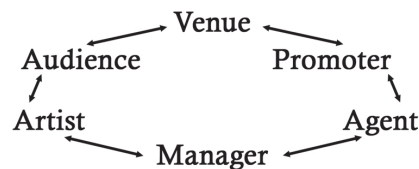
To return to the clarification of terms, agents are obviously a key profession in the live music industry, and the roles of promoter and agent would seem to be easy to distinguish. Thus Paul Charles of the Asgard Agency suggests that the role of promoter is to promote and produce the show (Charles, 2004), leaving the choice of artist, venue, and ticket price in the hands of the agent, who acts as a 'valve' between the promoter and the artist or their manager (Music Managers Forum, 2003, p. 221). This view is echoed by the Competition Commission which argues that an agent's role includes planning concerts and tours, agreeing the venues where the artist will perform and then appointing a promoter to produce the shows (Competition Commission 2007, p. 13). Whilst such accounts assume that the division of responsibilities between promoter and agent is straightforward, the reality of the situation is much more complex. A promoter may also be an agent (and, indeed, a manager or a performer) and in practice roles within the music industries are continually shifting. For example, managers now routinely book their acts and even put out their records, while record companies are moving into the merchandise market and the record retailer, HMV, has moved into promotion and venue ownership.

The emergence of Live Nation as the largest promotional company in the world has challenged the common-sense definition of a concert promoter even further. Live Nation – a spin-off from US-based media giant Clear Channel created in 2005 – claimed to produce over 22,000 concerts for 1,600 artists in 33 countries in 2008 (Live Nation, 2008b), and is responsible for tours, festivals and other events, using both its own venues and others' if required. The company also made headlines when, under the direction of former chairman Michael Cohl, it pursued multiple rights or '360-deals' with major artists, acquiring rights to touring, merchandising, sponsorship, ticketing, and broadcast and digital media rights through direct deals with Madonna, U2, Shakira, Jay-Z and Nickelback.⁵ Although Live Nation has now since ceased pursuing such deals (Cohl, who was the driving force behind the 360-deals, left the company in June 2008), its current strategy is developing a one-stop distribution system for the consumption of live events and any related products and services (FYI Music News, 21 June 2008; Latham, 2009). This distribution system could include tickets, merchandise, albums, or any artist-related product yet to be designed, and is built on the development of a long-term relationship between customer and brand, aided by databases containing millions of customers' contact details and history of concert attendances (Reynolds, 2007, pp. 393-401; Latham, 2009). As evidence of its attempts to consolidate its vision of a one-stop distribution system for live entertainment, Live Nation's most significant announcement in 2009 was a proposed merger with global ticketing leader Ticketmaster (at the time of writing, the merger has been accepted by the Competition Commission following a previous challenge by Live Nation's ticketing partner, CTS Eventim (Masson, 2010)).

With the rapidly shifting changes in music consumption affecting the traditional roles and responsibilities of the music industries, how does one now define the role of a concert promoter? Are promoters corporate entities? Gig organisers? Rights holders? The image of the promoter as individual entrepreneur does seem to be increasingly misleading, at least for medium sized and large events. These days the 'promoters' of such events are likely to be just the 'rep' for a promotional company, rather than the person who actually organised the show. As one agent puts it:

The truth is that the promoter is now rarely more than a figurehead. There are teams of people doing everything. In the good old days, the promoters would do the divvy up at the end of the night directly with the manager. Nowadays, the promoter's accountant will do a 90-minute settlement (usually during the course of the artist's performance) with the artist's tour accountant. The promoter will still make sure he does a bit of back-slapping PR with the act, the manager or the agent to ensure he protects his position for the future (Charles, 2004, p. 140).

Comparing previous attempts to define the role of the promoter, it becomes clear that the term is used in a myriad of contexts and can describe a huge range of different functions. 'Promoter' is a word freely ascribed to individuals, small partnerships and companies, or vast multi-national corporate entities. One could potentially use a framework to simplify the network of intermediaries that bring together the artist and audience to create a live music event, such as the following (see Example 1):



Example 1: Live music network of intermediaries

However, such separate roles are frequently performed by the same person: artists can promote their own gig; an agent may hire a venue and put on a concert of the artists they represent; or, in the case of Live Nation, a company may own a venue, organise the publicity for a concert and have an exclusive rights agreement with the performing artist. Further, given the multitude of live music events that happen each year in the UK, many of which are outside the professionalised live music industry, distinctions between 'amateur' and 'professional' blur, even within the event itself (for further discussion of these distinctions, see Finnegan, 2007). For example, a promoter may use an agent to book a headline band but book a friend's band as support without going through an agent (or paying a fee). Defining the role of the promoter in a way that can be applied across our range of case studies is not a simple task.

In an effort to explain the complicated nature of the rock/pop concert promoter, and given that promoters are described in a variety of ways and have a wide range of functions, our own approach begins with the premise that the role of the promoter is by its nature *flexible* and operates within a matrix of factors constituting the structural, the personal and the external. Structurally the matrix might include the following: the promoter's level of responsibility and geographical remit (a promoter may operate locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally); the organisational scale and structure of their promotional operation; the conventions associated with particular music genres, and so on. The personal level of the matrix, which overlaps and interacts with the structural level, might include: whether the promoter is motivated by commercial or cultural interests; whether the promoter is 'professional', 'semi-professional', or 'amateur'; the promoter's own musical tastes, and so on. Finally, within the external level of the matrix, the role of the promoter will depend on how the other actors who may have a stake in the live music event are involved in the event itself, including the artist, the audience, the technical

crew, publicists, record label, venue, agent and artist's management. It is also possible that the promoter, in addition to fulfilling the role of 'promoter' (however it is defined), has additional roles as any one of the actors listed above. In this way, another common characteristic of the promoter—as with many occupations within the music industries—is a position *integrated* with another part of the business of music (or 'wearing several hats at once'), a trait that will become apparent in the research presented later in this article.

Despite the complexity of the promoter's role, we think it is possible to categorise three basic models of promotion within rock and pop:

- i) the *independent model* whereby the promoter acts as a facilitator whose income comes via door receipts. The amount of income is based on the share of profits or guaranteed fee that the promoter has arranged to pay the artist, depending on the contractual agreement, and the promoter hires the venue and the artist for the event.
- ii) the *artist-affiliated model* whereby the promoter is linked to the artist in some way (or in some cases, is the artist), and therefore collects income from door receipts and performance-associated fees, whether directly or indirectly. The promoter will usually hire the venue for the event.
- iii) the *venue model* whereby the venue acts as promoter or is provided as an empty shell for external promoters, either hiring the artist for their own event or leasing the venue to another promoter/promotion company. Even in the latter case income will be made from bar takings and catering; this will be explored later in the article.

Concert promoters may favour one type of promotional model over another but they are certainly not restricted to it, and in practice will adjust their role from one event to another depending on the particularities of any given concert. To further explore this complex situation, the rest of our article will develop some of the ideas above using our different but overlapping research approaches, beginning with an overview of the historical research.

British pop concert promotion since 1955

Concert promoters in the mid-1950s faced quite a different set of challenges than those today.⁶ First, it was a time when press headlines were dominated by repeated announcements of the death of variety and repertory shows (*Melody Maker* [hereafter MM], 29 September 1956, p. 8). Once the most popular entertainment venues in the UK, music-halls were now struggling across the country, with competition from TV and cinemas usually cited as the reason for dwindling audiences (Mander and Mitchenson, 1974, pp. 169-173). There was also a completely different protocol for US musicians wishing to play in the UK and the promoters who wanted to bring them over. According to Jim Godbolt (1989), in 1934 the British Musicians' Union decided that in an effort to protect the livelihoods of British musicians, it would urge the Ministry of Labour to deny work permits to foreign musicians wishing to play in

Britain; and in response, the American Federation of Musicians adopted a similar stance towards British musicians wishing to perform in the US. In the case of dance bands and jazz orchestras, the Musicians' Union would suggest that American bands, for instance, be denied permits unless a reciprocal agreement was in place where a British dance band would be sent to the US to perform in exchange.⁷ The historical details of this arrangement are yet to be fully researched, and it is clear that American vocalists (who were not recognised as musicians by the AFM) as well as certain instrumentalists were granted permits, and performed in the UK during the period that Godbolt describes as a 'ban on foreign musicians' (*ibid.*).⁸ According to Godbolt, though, the policy effectively discouraged British promoters from trying to bring American jazz and pop instrumentalists to the UK, despite there being a healthy, if untapped, audience for their music.

It was only in the years 1952-55, when Norman Granz was repeatedly prevented from bringing his *Jazz at the Philharmonic* European tour to the UK, that the policy was met with enough sustained complaint from promoters, audiences, and artists to be changed. The first British/American dance band reciprocal exchange approved by both the union and the Ministry of Labour seems to have occurred in 1955, opening the floodgates to a host of US-UK musician exchanges in the years to come (Godbolt, 1989, pp. 166-188). Along with the decline of variety shows and the problematic reciprocal arrangement between the unions, this was also the time when R&B was being increasingly appropriated by white performers and crossing over into mainstream culture as 'rock 'n' roll' on both sides of the Atlantic. It is within this context that British promoters in 1955 sought to navigate the changes occurring in popular music.

Some differences between the live music promotion business of 1955 and today include the absence in 1955 of both corporate promoting entities and a professionalised sector of ancillary industries (live sound engineering, ticketing, transport, etc.), and the presence of a more informal network of venues, agents, managers, and promoters, with key individual entrepreneurial personalities leading the way. At the top of the promoting food chain were established promoters such as Harold Fielding. Fielding could be considered to represent an early version of both the independent and artist-affiliated models of concert promotion, depending on the event, as he was also one of Britain's leading talent agents as well as an occasional artist manager. By establishing a reputation for bringing in US artists with his successful Sunday night concert series at the New Opera House in Blackpool (where he promoted Frank Sinatra and Judy Garland), he eventually became one of the first British promoters (along with Harold Davison) to refuse to be discouraged by the restrictions of the US-UK musicians' union reciprocal agreements, and instead aggressively negotiated with top American agencies to arrange exchange tours between American and British jazz musicians. Fielding brought in stars such as Ella Fitzgerald, Oscar Peterson, Count Basie, and others in trade for British bandleaders such as Johnny Dankworth and Ted Heath (MM, 22 January 1955, p. 3; MM, 9 February 1957, p. 4).

There were also newcomer promoters who were quick to see the potential in the burgeoning rock 'n' roll and teen pop market. Among the most famous of the British pop promoters in the 1950s was Larry Parnes. Like Fielding, Parnes used both independent and artist-affiliated models of promotion, and was integrated in the music industries as a manager of pop artists. Although Parnes had dabbled in theatre promotion, his first real experience in the music industries came when he started managing Tommy Steele at the beginning of his career.⁹ Parnes quickly developed a teen-beat roster and became a leading

promoter of ‘package tours’ booked up and down the country. For a time, it looked as though 1950s pop acts like Tommy Steele, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury – all of whom toured the pre-existing Variety circuit – might give Variety a much-needed shot in the arm. However, eventually it became clear that, as music halls continued to close, pop package tours could be booked into cinema chains and town halls instead. This drew attention to the difference of these sorts of package shows from traditional variety nights, not least in their predominantly youthful audiences.¹⁰

There were also, of course, plenty of less visible concert promoters working in London and towns across the UK, promoting either smaller-scale music events or working as local experts in conjunction with higher-profile London-based agents (such as Lew Grade and Tito Burns) and promoters like Fielding and Parnes. It was obviously difficult for high profile London-based promoters to keep an eye on the constantly changing live music scenes in every town across the UK, so instead the London promoters would usually work with an informal network of local promoters (or at least a knowledgeable local insider on the town’s live music scene) in each town or region. Such promoters tended to work within the independent model of promotion, and had knowledge of which venues in their town could best match a certain kind of act with its target audience. Some of these promoters hired town halls from the local council or ballrooms from various proprietors, while at other times the proprietors of venues would either book concerts themselves or hire a managing director or in-house booker (the venue model of promotion).¹¹

Many local promoters also ran small jazz clubs, which were hugely important for the British live music scene. In some cases, a club was a permanent venue that featured live music (the most famous example in jazz, for instance, Ronnie Scott’s Club, opened in 1959), and sometimes it merely referred to the night itself—for instance, a jazz ‘club’ might take place once a week in a local pub or coffee bar. It is possible to get a sense of how these clubs changed over time, because when popular styles went in and out of fashion in the mid-1950s to early 1960s (e.g. skiffle, rock ‘n’ roll, folk, and trad), *Melody Maker* would often report on any controversial changes, such as an established jazz club changing its policy to include rock ‘n’ roll once a week in order to remain competitive.¹² Furthermore, since venues known for live music often ran clubs catering to different musical tastes on different nights of the week, there was more crossover than one might expect between these different genres. In fact, some promoters, such as Larry Parnes, actively booked live music packages that featured a mixture of rock, trad, and other styles (MM, 22 October 1960, p. 24).

This system of informal relationships did not mean that the 1950s live music landscape did not already have certain consolidated, single-owned networks of venues. Ballrooms were key venues during this time, and companies such as Rank and Mecca each owned ballroom chains that crossed the country. Cinema chains, such as Odeon and Granada, also became important venues for live music, especially as music-halls began to close from the mid-1950s onwards (certain chains of music-hall theatres, such as Moss Empire theatres, would remain significant for some years). Promoters would frequently book artists on a tour across a chain of ballrooms or cinemas.¹³ City councils of larger metropolitan areas also owned public halls where live music could be heard, and sometimes this centralised ownership could have wide-ranging impact on a local scene: for instance, in 1956 *Melody Maker* reported that the general manager of Glasgow’s public halls had banned rock ‘n’ roll from 20 council-owned venues (10 November 1956, p.

4). Holiday camps were significant venues for live music in the summer months, and several of these, such as Butlins, had consolidated ownership and would sign exclusive contracts with promoters for mass-bookings.¹⁴ These holiday camps were very important in establishing the reputations of both dance bands and early pop acts, and 'name' bands were important attractions in the camps' marketing.¹⁵

Finally, the mid-1950s saw the birth of the prototypes for the UK music festival. As Michael Clarke has noted, 'pop festivals have their origins quite simply in music concerts' and concerts billed as 'festivals' had certainly taken place earlier, from the Glyndebourne Festival (which began in 1934) to numerous one-day indoor concert events that were billed as 'festivals' (Clarke, 1982, p. 20). However, if one considers as necessary criteria for the modern pop festival that it be (a) open-air and (b) a multi-day event where the audience is allowed to camp overnight, then it is generally agreed that the first example of this is Beaulieu Jazz Festival in 1958. The Beaulieu festival continued to run until 1961, but it suffered from crowd disturbances that ultimately caused its promoter, Lord Montagu, to abandon the festival (McKay, 2005, pp. 69-86). During that time, however, many other jazz festivals had sprung up throughout the UK, and by 1961 open-air music festivals were occurring almost every weekend during the summer months, a phenomenon dubbed by some in the press as 'festival-mania' (Barber, 29 July 1961, p. 3). The most significant of these was the National Jazz Festival in 1961, sponsored by the National Jazz Federation and promoted by Harold Pendleton.¹⁶

By 1962, however, jazz promoters were beginning to face at least three serious challenges that had an effect on the festival business. First, whereas British audiences had previously been starved of the most famous American jazz stars, the practice of musician exchanges had now been going for several years, and the sound of American jazz was changing. One journalist noted that US artists were no longer guaranteed to sell out theatres as they used to, partly because the novelty of US musicians performing in the UK was beginning to wear off, but also because the music of modern jazz players such as John Coltrane and Miles Davis proved far less popular with the British concert-going public (Jones, 1962). Second, there was a fear that the rapid growth in the number of summer jazz festivals might over-saturate the market. In 1963, journalist Bob Dawbarn expressed concern that 'with a general contraction in the jazz club business, can all the 1963 festivals make money? [...] There can be no doubt that many of the promoters are taking a very real risk and most have responded with a wider variety of music' (MM, 1 June 1963, p. 2). Dawbarn's mention of programming a broader range of genres is connected to the third significant challenge for jazz promoters: the musical tastes of British youth were continuing to lean away from jazz and towards rock, pop, and R&B. This was manifest in both their choice of concerts and their tastes in dance events: young audiences on a night out gradually went to fewer live dance orchestras, instead preferring to dance to DJs spinning records of popular artists or a mix of live bands and dance records. These shifts also affected the landscape of appropriate venues for live music, as the behaviour for attending live post-bop jazz (where audiences came to sit and listen), R&B (where audiences came to dance), often differed from the accepted behaviour of mainstream and trad jazz audiences, thus affecting what kind of venue space was desirable for hosting live music.

Promoters who proved unable to adapt to such changes risked commercial ruin, but those who remained flexible were able to reap rewards. Cliff Richard and the Shadows, one of the most popular acts performing 'teen-beat' music, sold out tours in record numbers.¹⁷ Cliff and the Shadows were one

of the pioneering youth pop acts who began to tour in their own right rather than as part of a package tour, not least because they were able to perform sets without relying on a pick-up band. However, it was not until the rise of The Beatles in 1963 in the UK (1964 in the US), who initially followed this model and toured on the same cinema circuit, that promoters began to realise that the economics and scale of live concert touring had the potential to grow to a level previously unseen in Britain. The exponential growth in audience demand for their appearances meant that The Beatles, working with promoter Arthur Howes, moved the economic gateposts for the live music sector. But The Beatles were merely the most famous example of a much broader shift occurring in the live music promotion landscape. Joe Boyd, an American record producer who also worked in British concert promotion,¹⁸ recalled in an interview that the mid-1960s saw the rise of not only a new breed of pop artist, but also a new kind of intermediary – the modern pop manager – to negotiate the relationship between artist and concert promoter. According to Boyd,

What you're really seeing in the big picture was the capture of huge swaths of the towering heights of the music business by middle class performers [... Pop music] was originally a working class job. Elvis, Carl Perkins, Chuck Berry were working class people, poor people. The Colonel Parker / Elvis relationship is a classic template of a guy who's grown up in a shack being taken under the wing of a clever, powerful figure, that says 'son, here boy, don't give me any shit.' And then by the 1960s you have the Pink Floyd, Beatles and Stones, who are middle class people to a certain degree, maybe not quite so much with the Beatles, but Mick Jagger very much was. And they're going to take their success and say, 'wait a minute, why are we only getting 8 cents a record? Why are we only getting £1000, obviously the promoter's taking in £20,000, where's our share?' (Boyd, 2008).

The growth of the live music market and a generation of pop artists making new demands consequently gave rise to, in Boyd's words, 'this generation of a funny mixture of aristocrat and working class managers' who were prepared to take on the concert promotion establishment 'in a very aggressive way' (*ibid.*). The earliest of this new breed of managers, which included Brian Epstein (The Beatles), Andrew Loog Oldham (The Rolling Stones), and Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp (The Who), may have made deals which retrospectively seem naïve in terms of generating currently accepted income percentages for top-shelf artists; but these were important at the time in beginning to erode the prevailing business models of that era.

These new kinds of negotiations had an effect not only on the biggest drawing artists and their relationships with promoters, but also on smaller acts and their changing expectations of the concert promoter's position in the hierarchy of the live music sector. As early as 1964, one can see the first evidence of the straining relationships between concert promoters and pop artists in the *Melody Maker*, when the paper covered one promoter's attempt to organise a formal association of promoters. Along with the dozen club promoters who attended his meeting, he issued the following statement: 'It was generally agreed today that the formation of a promoters' association has become necessary. The main reason is the unrealistic fees demanded by agencies and managers of groups, which leads to high admission prices and the resultant exploitation of teenagers who attend the dance halls' (MM, 28 November 1964, p. 5).

Between 1965 and 1967, many more accounts appeared reporting a growing tension on both sides between promoters and performers in the UK. Some performers expressed dissatisfaction with playing British ballrooms with inadequate facilities, (MM, 9 October 1965, p. 4; MM, 8 January 1966, p. 3), while investigations of the ‘perils of pop’ and the ‘shady men on its fringes’ pointed the finger largely at promoters (MM, 9 July 1966, pp. 8-9). The article reported a litany of crooked promoting practices, with artists complaining of promoters advertising that they had booked an artist when no agreement had ever been made, or the well-worn cliché of promising to pay by cheque and put the artist’s fee in the post and never actually posting it (*ibid.*). Other complaints included local bands being asked to ‘audition’ for future gigs by performing live shows where the promoter took money at the door, but without seeing any cut of the door themselves nor being asked to return for a paying gig (MM, 11 February 1967, p. 20).

However, other articles made it clear that complaints were also rife among promoters, with several stories of promoters trying to form associations to ‘to protect themselves against the non-fulfilment of contracts by a minority of beat groups [and] the attitude of indifference by professional groups who are represented by top line agents’ (MM, 13 February 1966, p. 4). One promoter complained of being ‘completely tired with this situation [where] at the moment any group that enters the top 20 is liable to let you down’ (MM, 17 September 1966, p. 25). Another opinion piece argued that bands routinely failed to show up for gigs using any number of excuses such as illness, vans breaking down, arriving with no equipment, disbandment, or simple non-fulfilment of a contract due to getting a record in the charts and signing up for better paying gigs elsewhere (MM, 28 January 1967, p. 8).

The mid-1960s were clearly a period of tension and transition for British pop concert promotion. During this time it became increasingly difficult to predict how quickly the popularity of a given act would rise between the booking of a performance and the actual concert. Early pop tours, such as the Parnes-styled pop packages, were based on previous record sales success — for instance, one poster for an early Beatles tour of Scotland billed them as ‘those “Love Me Do” boys’ (McNab, 2008). However, in the mid-1960s it was clear that live shows could also precede and have a significant impact on record sales, as in the case of the Rolling Stones, who initially built their reputation as a live act. The speed with which a band’s popularity could change made it much harder to determine even six months in advance how big an act would be, hence the numerous documented disputes with last-minute demands for increased fees. Long-time band manager Peter Jenner recalled how some precautions were taken in contracts to account for this unpredictability, such as ‘charts clauses’ which adjusted the agreed fee for a band based on the position of their single in the charts at the time of performance, as opposed to the time of the initial booking (Jenner 2008). A later solution to come into place was for an act’s record company to take control of touring to fit in with album promotion (a model which is becoming problematic in the contemporary live music industry). At the time, however, the rapid growth of the pop concert market meant that existing norms of live music promotion — on structural, technical, and performative levels — were no longer adequate to meet market demand in either the UK or US, and finding a solution was often a painful process of trial and error.

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed innovations in concert promotion to address these challenges. Specialist rock and pop promoters such as Tony Smith and Harvey Goldsmith began to replace the old guard of promoters (many of whom moved into theatre and light entertainment), while ancillary

live music industries emerged to meet new demands in sound and lighting equipment and its transport. Student unions also became significant in providing venues that were appropriate to these new kinds of concerts, therefore establishing a new touring circuit that was crucial for the development of many mid-level acts and serving as a training ground for a new generation of promoters, agents, and tour managers, many of whom found their way into the live music industry by working as social secretaries while at university. The relationship between the live and recorded music industries also developed, with record labels beginning to subsidise concert tours as a means of promoting record sales. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the British live music industry moved towards increasing professionalisation, with a Concert Promoters Association finally being successfully established in 1986 to give member promoters a collective voice to lobby government and protect their interests, as well as helping to shed their 'bad reputation in the past for being aggressive wheeler-dealers, making excessive profits, and occasionally running off with the takings' (Negus, 1992, p. 130). In the 1990s, ticketing companies such as Ticketmaster shifted some of the balance of power away from promoters as they took over the mechanics of ticket selling and increased revenue potential via booking fees and commission,¹⁹ while media conglomerates such as Clear Channel and SFX (with the former eventually buying the latter and rebranding its live music interests as Live Nation) grew by buying up smaller promoters primarily in the US and UK. This period also witnessed a rise in ticket prices well above inflation (Krueger, 2005).

The live music sector in the 21st century has so far continued to grow rapidly, a feat ascribed to the proliferation of festivals, tours by so-called 'heritage acts', the changing demographic of audiences, and the expansion of the secondary ticketing market. The contemporary British pop and rock live music sector may therefore seem worlds apart from its early days, but the central promotional task, to bring performers and audience together in a particular place at a particular time, remains the same, and the historical lesson is that the successful promoter is the one who can adapt what they do to changing circumstances. What such adaptability means to promoters themselves in their everyday dealings is the subject of the next section.

An ethnography of promoters

Promoters are interesting not simply in economic terms, but because the economics of promotion rests on the promoter's ability to broker the relationship between musician and audience through the personal relationships they have with both. Our research here draws on interview material, observation at live music events and analysis of relevant media; our aim is to show how promoters understand the experience that they seek to persuade audiences to purchase and enjoy. In this section, then, we will explore contemporary promoters' roles and responsibilities by focusing on their everyday relationships with agents, artists and audiences.

The promoters interviewed were a mixed group, reflecting the multi-faceted nature of promotion in general.²⁰ They ranged in experience from someone who had only promoted two small-scale hip hop gigs to a music veteran who has been promoting gigs for 25 years. It is clear from our interview research that the informal networks described in the previous section still exist, and that small and large-scale promoters co-exist symbiotically (compare Negus 1996 on independent and major record labels). An

ecology of live music events and venues (small, large, ‘professional’, ‘amateur’) must be in place, it seems, for a healthy local musical scene.²¹ In making sense of the variety of our findings of what it means to be a live music promoter currently we will therefore follow the typology suggested in our introduction.

The independent model

Mark Mackie of Edinburgh’s Regular Music has been promoting some of the world’s largest artists, including such acts as Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen and Oasis, for nearly 25 years. Mackie began his promotional career whilst at university, and was the Entertainments Convener for the University of Glasgow’s Queen Margaret Union in the mid-1980s, a time when student unions were a respected training ground for fledgling live music industry personnel. Mackie knew that he wanted to continue to work with music, and so when he graduated he joined Regular Music, which had been established as Scotland’s leading promotional company since 1977. According to Mackie, as a promoter, ‘what you’re paid for is two things. One, you’re taking the risk, right? ‘Cos you are the only person who is underwriting the show, you’re risking it all. But two, at the end you have to produce the show too; you have to come through with your promise’ (Mackie, 2008, emphasis in original). When asked about his role as a promoter at the event itself, he replied that it is to ‘pull everything together that has been done for me’, to organise the settlement (the costings) with the tour manager, and to socialise with industry types backstage as this is where many deals will be made and personal friendships and alliances formed (*ibid.*). Mackie therefore acts as a facilitator for events. His activities as a promoter can be classified using the independent model, as he has no financial investment in the artists he promotes, other than to increase their profile, build on his relationship with their agents and management, and to make a profit for Regular.

The artist-affiliated model

Alan Deadman started as a DJ at fundraising events and launched his ‘world music’ night – The JuJu Club – with some friends in Sheffield in the late 1990s. They developed a taste for promoting live music after providing social events for the World Student Games, and started to promote live bands as part of their regular DJ nights. Deadman was made redundant from his teaching job in 1997 and used his redundancy money to promote music full time. Alongside The JuJu Club, he established a monthly club night — Headcharge — with a partner, and DJ-ed there as one of a number of resident disc jockeys. Deadman thus facilitated the events but also collected an income as a performer. His activities can therefore be classified as artist-affiliated.

Deadman’s role at The JuJu Club was not simply to look after and pay the musicians and oversee the event itself. He would also act as compère, introducing the artists when they came on. He describes his role as ‘being very personable and being very much there, and having a good time and dancing your socks off yourself’, thus describing his sense of responsibility to both audience and artist (Deadman, 2008). However, at a larger-scale JuJu event (for example, when he promoted Desmond Dekker at Sheffield’s Leadmill) Deadman’s activities follow the independent model. He neither performed nor compèred at this event; his role in the Leadmill was much less ‘front region’ and much more ‘back region’ (Goffman, 1959, pp. 231-2). The venue was simply too large for him to be able to put himself forward as he did in smaller club settings; his identity as the promoter was therefore more covert. Deadman exemplifies

the concept of a promoter wearing many hats as his involvement not only changes from event to event — dependent on his relationship with artist, audience, agent and venue — but the nature of each event means that his role may change even during the event itself.

The venue model

Mark Hobson owns and manages the Corporation nightclub in Sheffield, which hosts live music events alongside DJ-based club nights. Hobson, as a young rock fan in the mid-1980s, was disappointed by the lack of options available to him in Sheffield as a sixth former until a friend suggested that he started DJ-ing himself. From playing at other people's nights, Hobson quickly established his own successful events and began to promote live bands when musicians asked to perform at his nights—he established his first Corporation nightclub in Sheffield in 1997. The Corporation quickly became a successful independent rock venue. It hosts a mixture of internally promoted live events and club nights and is also hired to external promoters.²² When asked why he decided to buy his own venue when both the independent and artist-affiliated models of promotion appeared to be so successful for him, Hobson answered,

I could've stayed like that – I could've, it wasn't too difficult. But I felt it was rather unstable, and . . . it's a young person's game . . . So I had to, make the leap, I suppose. I didn't want to be 40 years old, playing my classic hits in a pub on Sunday afternoon . . . [laughs] (Hobson, 2008a, emphasis in original).

When asked if he still DJs at the venue, Hobson replied, 'I wish I still did. Too much paperwork these days, so unfortunately not. I still do a bit on a Saturday if I'm bored and I've had a pint!' (Hobson, 2008b). Nowadays, Hobson sees himself primarily as a venue booker, whose focal point on the day of an event is the band. Technically he is the venue owner and manager as well, but he now delegates responsibility for the actual venue management to a member of his team.

As noted in the previous section, one distinguishing feature between the 1950s/1960s live music industry and the present day is the absence then of corporate promoting entities and a professionalised sector of ancillary industries. Another major change is that it is arguably more difficult now to establish oneself as a large-scale promoter. Today large promotional companies are apt to take over smaller companies (horizontal integration) and the costs of expansion are too high for individual promoters to manage (given the sharp increase in artist fees, the decline of record company subsidy and the consequent need for additional income from merchandise, drink sales, sponsorship, etc.—see Competition Commission, 2007). Whilst non-music-related venues²³ (such as sports stadiums), and non-commercial, music-related venues (such as town halls) are still used by independent live music promoters, the promoter-owned venue model of promotion is becoming more common. For example, in Nottingham, the equivalent rock venue to Corporation is Rock City, owned and managed by the DHP Group. Started in 1980, the DHP Group was the original owner of Rock City, and has since expanded to own four live music venues in Nottingham, and one in Bristol. In addition to owning and managing venues, DHP books and promotes live events across the country, as well as organising outdoor festivals and events. The DHP-owned venue in Bristol is the Thekla, and in the words of the Thekla's ex-General Manager, Hayley Pearce:

I think that's the secret, is to own the venue, because you're putting on a show in your own venue, and you're getting money from tickets and you're getting money from everything that's spent in there. And that is the answer. It means you're guaranteed a certain amount of money from putting on a show in your own venue. It means you can put on something that might be a little bit risky – I don't know – can make you a bit more edgy, or more attractive to a different crowd, so you can spread, you know, the net wider, as to who you're gonna get in your venue. It means more people know about you. You can put on the more reliable stuff in someone else's bigger venue. It doesn't always work, but that is the sensible theory behind it. (Pearce, 2008, emphasis in original)

DHP hire out their venues to other promoters, such as Live Nation, as well as smaller promoters, and they also use other venues to promote their own events. Upon examining the listings for most live music venues, this is often the case: there is a mixture of internally and externally booked events. As is clear from these examples, being a promoter and/or a venue owner does not mean that one necessarily uses the venue model for promoting every event; instead, the promoter must decide which model will be the most appropriate for the event in question.

Whatever model used, promoters have to negotiate three kinds of relationship — with agents, with artists and with audiences. Agents tend to prefer to work with promoters with whom they work regularly, and to arrange a gig the promoter will either contact the agent to book a particular artist, or the agent will contact the promoter to sell a concert or tour. Small-scale promoters often try to bypass the agent, if they have a personal relationship with the band, for example, 'Some artists have agents but because they like you, they'll let you book directly, cutting out the poor old agent and their fee'. (Deadman, 2008, emphasis in original). This suggests that the issue of trust between promoter and artist is more problematic the more the distance between them — both geographically and personally. Where relationships are personal and local, agents and contracts are deemed relatively unnecessary; where relationships are impersonal and geographically distant — and where the sums of money involved are higher — agents and contracts are deemed essential.²⁴

The responsibility of the promoter to the artist has become more formalised over time, through the increased use of contracts and riders, but successful promoters have always understood the need to look after the artist if they are to return. This may be by correctly fulfilling the requested rider, or being available and personable at the event itself; larger promotional companies often use representatives who fulfil this role. Personal relations between the promoter and artist (or artist manager) are an important means of building a relationship that will ensure an artist will want to work with the promoter in the future:

[You] want the band to feel welcome when they come, and want to come back . . . We had a band come the other day, and they were like 'Oh thank god we're in Sheffield!' I was like, 'Why? Why is that?!' And they said, "Cos we know we're going to get a decent meal!" [laughs] (Hobson, 2008a, emphasis in original)

The promoter's responsibility to the audience has also become more formalised, through various legislative Acts of Parliament and associated regulations, although promoters have always understood their dual responsibility to both artist and audience.²⁵ Successful promoters are those who spend time in front of the stage as well as backstage, who directly try to ensure the audience's comfort and safety, which can involve issues such as the quality and level of the sound, the temperature of the venue, and the behaviour and professionalism of the security staff. As with the artist, the promoter is attempting to build a long-term relationship with the audience in order to ensure their future patronage:

If you don't know what is going on out front, then you can't see what the audience go through and then you don't know how you can improve it. It is really important that an environment is created that works. It's a two-way process; the audience has got to be happy and then they will make the act happy (Harvey Goldsmith in Barrett, 2008b).

One venue owner in Sheffield perceived the loyalty of his regular audiences as lying in the fact that:

We know all the regulars, because a lot of our bands are repeat bands . . . So, we make a point of trying to be here, so people have got . . . They've got faces, basically, they come in, and we know the problems some of the regulars are having with their kids, we know where they go on holiday, and it's great! For a lot of them, it's more of a social thing (Wilson, 2008, emphasis in original).

It is difficult to conceive of a giant company like Live Nation cultivating the personal relationships Wilson describes here, if only because of the sheer volume of live events it promotes annually. The physical distance between a corporate promoter or venue booker and the show itself also makes a personal relationship between such a promoter and their audience difficult — hence the following anecdote from a local venue manager. The venue booker (a corporate employee based in another city) had booked an American hip-hop band to headline with a local band to support. The support band didn't turn up for the gig, the main act only played for forty-five minutes, and only seven people bought tickets. Result: the venue received complaints from the ticket-buyers for organising a 'bad show'. Were the complaints due to the fact that the support band didn't appear?

Yeah, and the booker for booking an act that didn't pull enough . . .

EW: But it's you as the venue that has to sweep up the mess . . .

Always, always.

EW: How much are you able to go back to the booker and say, 'That didn't work'? Can you refuse bookings?

No, no . . . I mean, we knew, beforehand, that that gig should have been pulled; they should have pulled it. It would have cost us less money to refund for two tickets, to not pay the staff, to not pay the sound engineer, electricity, etc. etc. Still put them up in [a hotel], still give them their fee, but scrap the rest. And he should have *done* that, but *didn't*.

EW: But were you telling the booker this?

Pointless. Yeah.

EW: And he wouldn't listen?

No.

EW: Why not though?

Dunno. Well, because he's been doing it for years and he thinks he knows better. I think also there's the school of thought that goes, you know, you can't . . . if you cancel a gig, it looks bad. And rather, sort of, put it on at a loss than cancel it. Being from the venue, I feel differently.

EW: He's got to go back to the agent and explain why . . .

Yeah. And I've got to explain to the customers why it's shit and there's no-one there.

Promoters, then, must negotiate a variety of roles depending on the event in question and nurture relationships with agents, audiences, artists and their managers within the matrix described in the introduction. Each promoter must decide the most appropriate model of promotion for their event, and their actions at the event will be dependent on their personality and their relationship with these key players.

Conclusion

In his article, 'Live music matters', Frith (2007) argued that the live music industry has been a neglected area of popular music studies. Building on his work, we hope to have demonstrated that concert promoters matter. Indeed, promoters matter to artists now more than ever, as changes in music revenue sources force musicians to think of live music (concert fees, merchandise, performing rights, and so on) rather than record sales as their primary source of income.²⁶ Promoters also matter more than ever to audiences: they organise the live music events which are ever more valuable for the 'public celebration of musical commitment'. (ibid., p. 14) And promoters continue to matter to the record industry, even if how they matter has changed significantly over the years. Whereas record labels once subsidised concert production costs and tours were scheduled according to record release dates, the contemporary recording industry has to consider the summer festival schedule, and must understand how to time an album release to best promote an artist on the live circuit.

This is not to say, however, that concert promoters have become all-powerful. In 1966 economists Baumol and Bowen argued that live music was economically unsustainable without some kind of outside financial subsidy. If tour support from record companies thus became a crucial part of live rock and pop promotion from the 1970s to the 1990s, now that labels are cutting back on this, other kinds of financial support are increasingly important. Corporate sponsorship has been significant for live rock

and pop touring since the Rolling Stones did a deal with Jovan Perfume for their 1981 shows. Since then other industries, notably alcohol and more recently mobile telecommunications, have used live music sponsorship as a key part of their branding strategies. Live music also benefits from state subsidy with public support coming in different forms: arts and entertainment grants; the provision of police; subsidised student unions from the late 1960s to the 1980s; public investment in large venues such as arenas, and so on. Live music festivals often make claims about their economic significance for the particular community in which they take place, while using such claims to call forth public investment (Barrett, 2008c). Although promoters see themselves as the ones who take the financial risk, much of that risk is, in fact, distributed and borne, in part, by the public sector.

The relationship between promoters and the state is also complicated by the regulation of live music events. Promoters have to operate in a completely different regulatory climate than the recording industry; they have to comply with licensing regulations, health and safety regulations, and noise control. In addition to being more likely to get public support, the live sector is more vulnerable than recorded music to state and local regulation, and live music participants (promoters, artists, and audiences), are likely to experience state regulation of their live musical experiences in a much more direct way than with recorded music consumption. These regulations make up part of the constantly changing political and cultural circumstances through which a promoter must navigate.

The changing dynamic between the live and recorded music industries needs further research. At the time of writing, Live Nation is a more economically significant music company than any of the 'big four' major record labels apart from Universal. The global live music industry is currently the most buoyant it has ever been. British ticket prices are also at an all-time high, as is the saturation of the UK festival market. This has led to some commentators warning that the live music sector might be at risk of replicating the mistakes of the recording industry and disregarding the consumer in a quest for ever higher profit margins (Barrett, 2008a; Youngs, 2009). In the words of one interviewee, asked about current changes in the British live sector:

It's all about money. That's all it's about, it's about money, and if it's not about making money there and then, it's about using that agent, that agency, to book a band to make money off in the future . . . 'Butter up this band because they work with so-and-so, and that means we'll be able to book them at a better price, which means we can make more money'.

EW: Do you think they've lost sight of the fact that it's the customers who are making them the money?

Yeah, probably . . . I can't imagine that [the booker] gives a flying fuck! [laughs] Money money money!

The growth of corporate concert promotion, Live-Nation style, is bound to have effects on the ecology of live music. If the live music sector is to be sustained, new talent must develop, and for this to happen venues are needed for new 'amateur' artists as well as for established professionals. Indeed, live music needs an environment in which the amateur and professional spheres overlap and interact. This is why 'top-down' organisations such as Live Nation are potentially problematic: if the balance between venues and

ownership leans too far in one direction, then the whole ecology is endangered. On the other hand, the fact that live music is inevitably embedded in particular localities with their own unique set of contingencies makes it difficult for a corporate promoter ever to impose a completely standardised network of facilities. It will be interesting to see if the Live Nation model of promotion will continue to grow — it could as easily collapse²⁷ — or what lessons the live music industry will learn from the upheaval in the recording industry. What is certain is that live music will continue to matter and so, therefore, will promoters.

Acknowledgements

This paper draws on work by Simon Frith and Martin Cloonan as part of a larger project examining the promotion of live music in the UK, and is funded by AHRC research grant F00947/1. We would also like to acknowledge John Williamson for his contribution.

Endnotes

- 1 As always with music industry statistics we should treat these figures with skepticism but such press reports are significant in drawing public attention to a trend (the decline of the record industry, the rise of the live music industry) that is now taken for granted.
- 2 In pluralising the term 'music industry', we are building on the work of Williamson and Cloonan (2007), who have previously argued that the economic growth of the live music industry and business-model crisis in the recording industry make it problematic to refer to a single music industry with coherent characteristics. It is therefore to useful to instead apply the term 'music industries', especially given the subject matter of our article.
- 3 See www.gla.ac.uk/livemusicproject
- 4 The research project in which we are engaged investigates all forms of concert promotion. For the remainder of this article, though, we focus on promotion in the pop/rock world.
- 5 Nickelback's deal is for approximately 10 years (3 cycles) and the rights acquired include touring, tour sponsorship, tour merchandise, tour VIP/travel packages, secondary ticketing, recorded music, clothing, licensing and other retail merchandise, non-tour sponsorship and endorsements, DVD and broadcast rights, fan club, website and literary rights. Live Nation anticipated Nickelback's financial performance over the term of the deal as earning \$700 million in revenue, \$60 million in operating income, with a margin of 9% and an internal rate of return (IRR) of 32%. Note that this deal does not include potentially lucrative publishing rights (Live Nation, 2008a).
- 6 The term 'concert promoter' was certainly in use by 1955 (*MM*, 1 January 1955, p.5; *MM*, 18 June 1955, p.16).
- 7 The ban appeared to be focused at dance band musicians in particular, as opposed to classical musicians. The reason for this was likely a perception that British musicians were equal to Americans in performing classical repertoire, but that American musicians played better jazz than the British.
- 8 One reason for such inconsistencies was the ongoing debate concerning the difference between 'popular' versus 'concert' musicians. One such instance includes the British Musicians' Union opposing a work permit for the American pianist Art Tatum. The *Melody Maker* reported the MU saying 'it would not accept Tatum's classification as a "concert pianist." "He has won fame internationally as a jazz pianist," said MU Assistant General Secretary Ted Anstey' (18 June 1955, p.16). At the time of writing, however, we do not have sufficient research

to create an accurate account of how the Musicians' Union policy worked. We are presently conducting further research into the history of the reciprocal agreement between the British and American Musicians' Unions.

- 9 Harold Fielding was quickly brought in to act as Steele's agent, which proved to be a longstanding professional relationship between himself and Steele.
- 10 The closing of music-halls was no doubt also partly due to the fact that many of them were simply nearing the end of their life-span as buildings, and the cost of renovating them to modern standards would have been more expensive than building a new venue from scratch (or moving into more newly built entertainment spaces such as cinemas).
- 11 In *Melody Maker*, managing directors of venues were sometimes referred to as 'M.D.'s', which was a confusing reference since ballrooms and town halls could also have contracted 'musical directors,' who were often bandleaders for dance orchestras. Ballroom owners and city councils (who owned the town halls) often contracted orchestras on a yearly basis to be the resident orchestra at a particular venue. It was not until the late 1950s that these profitable and popular dance nights with live musicians gradually began to give way to 'disc hops,' where disc jockeys would play recordings of popular dance hits instead. In 1959, for instance, the Association of Ballrooms, which represented over 140 ballrooms across Britain, began to formally work with the Musicians Union against the perceived threat of 'disc hops' (*MM*, 6 June 1959, p.1).
- 12 See for instance, 'Club, Disc Boom as Rock-And-Roll Craze Spreads' (*MM*, 14 July 1956, p.2).
- 13 See for instance, Jerry Lee Lewis's tour of Britain (*MM*, 5 April 1958, p.16).
See for instance, Jerry Lee Lewis's tour of Britain (*MM*, 5 April 1958, p.16).
- 14 Harold Fielding, for instance, controlled the bookings for eight seaside resorts until 1963 (*Telegraph*, 30 September 2003).
- 15 Holiday camps are once again becoming significant as venues for live music, with festivals such as All Tomorrow's Parties being hosted regularly at Minehead's Butlins.
- 16 Pendleton was a key promoter who successfully adapted to changes in popular music tastes. As the manager of the Marquee Club, he successfully promoted jazz, R&B, and rock 'n' roll throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and managed to gradually adapt the programme for the National Jazz Festival over the 1960s so that it included a mix of jazz, R&B, rock and pop. By the time the festival moved from the Richmond Athletic Ground in Surrey to Reading, it was re-titled the Reading Rock Festival, where it continues today as the longest surviving pop festival in the UK.
- 17 See 'Police prepare for big Cliff and Shadows tour' (*MM*, 27 January 1962, p.16).
- 18 Boyd's first experience in concert promotion was working for Newport Jazz Festival organiser George Wein, who also booked jazz, R&B, and gospel package tours across Europe. Boyd later went on to promote his own influential, albeit short-lived, London club, UFO, in the burgeoning psychedelic scene of the mid-1960s.
- 19 Promoters, however, were able to get a 'kick back' in the form of a certain percentage of the booking fee from the ticketing companies.
- 20 Some of the interviewees wished to remain anonymous.
- 21 See Frith, S., Cloonan, M. and Williamson, J., 'On music as a creative industry' in Tony Jeffs and Andy Pratt ed. *Creativity and Innovation in the Culture Economy*, Routledge (2009) pp. 74-89.
- 22 The combination of live and recorded music as entertainment is a longstanding model in UK popular music history. The suggestion that discos and live venues are necessarily in competition with each other is therefore somewhat misleading.
- 23 See Frith's typology of venues in Brennan and Webster, 2008.
- 24 The issue that often arises in smaller, local live music events is the use, or lack of use, of contracts; often, the

deal between artist and promoter is verbal, or, these days, via an email conversation: 'You often get a situation where maybe the first time you book a band there's a contract, but if you get to know each other you don't' (Deadman, 2008). As the scale of the event increases, especially when booking 'out-of-town' artists, contracts are much more likely to be used, although as another promoter admitted, 'if you go through an agency, you end up signing contracts, although you find that the contracts are to protect them [rather] than you' (Razor, 2008, emphasis in original).

- 25 The live music industry is selling a social experience, as opposed to the recording industry, which is selling a concrete product and therefore has a different relationship to its market.
- 26 This has always been the case for the majority of working musicians but now has to be considered even by those who fantasise about successful recording careers.
- 27 Live Nation has yet to make a profit and is currently nearly \$1 billion in debt: as of December 31st, 2007, Live Nation's total indebtedness for borrowed money was approximately \$862.6 million (Live Nation, 2007).

List of references

Advertisement. 'Harold Fielding presents an evening with... Ella Fitzgerald and Oscar Peterson', *Melody Maker*, 22 January 1955, p. 3.

'Are All Promoters Angels?', *Melody Maker*, 11 February 1967, p. 20.

'Ballroom row', *Melody Maker*, 13 February 1966, p. 4.

'Ban these Disc Hops – Say Ballroom bosses', *Melody Maker*, 6 June 1959, p. 1.

Barber, 1961: C. Barber, 'The truth about jazz festivals', *Melody Maker*, 29 July (1961), p. 3.

Barrett, 2008a: Christopher Barrett, 'Managing music's future'. *Music Week*, 27 May (2008).

Barrett, 2008b: Christopher Barrett, 'You've got to have balls of steel'. Masterclass with Harvey Goldsmith. *Music Week*, 25 November (2008). <http://www.musicweek.com/story.asp?storyCode=1036274§ioncode=2>

Barrett, 2008c: Christopher Barrett, 'Creamfields provides multi-million pound boost to local economy', *Music Week*, 19 December (2008). <http://www.musicweek.com/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=1036506>

Baumol and Bowen, 1966: W.J. Baumol and W.G. Bowen, *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1966).

'Beatle Fever Hits Britain' All concerts sold out – and now a Royal Show spot', *Melody Maker*, 26 October 1963, p. 3.

Beattie, 2007: Will Beattie, *The Rock & Roll Times guide to the music industry: The 10 A & R commandments all bands need to know*. (Oxford: Spring Hill, 2007).

Boyd, 2008: Joe Boyd, Interview with Matt Brennan in London, 7 November (2008).

Brennan and Webster, 2008: Matt Brennan and Emma Webster, 'Introducing the Promoter', Paper presented at UK & Ireland IASPM Conference, Glasgow, 13 September (2008).

'...but Glasgow can't hear such bands', *Melody Maker*, 10 November 1956, p. 4.

Charles, 2004: Paul Charles, *The Complete Guide to Playing Live*. (London: Omnibus, 2004).

Clarke, 1982: Michael Clarke, *The Politics of Pop Festivals* (London: Junction Books, 1982).

'Club, Disc Boom as Rock-And-Roll Craze Spreads', 14 July 1956, p. 2.

'Club promoters to combine', *Melody Maker*, 28 November 1964, p. 5.

Coleman, 1963: R. Coleman, 'Beatles Beware!', *Melody Maker*, 2 November (1963), p. 1.

Competition Commission, 2007: *Competition Commission, Hamsard and Academy Music: A report on the proposed acquisition of a controlling interest in Academy Music Holdings Limited by Hamsard 2786 Limited*, (2007), http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/rep_pub/reports/2007/fulltext/522.pdf

Deadman, 2008: Alan Deadman, Interview with Emma Webster in Sheffield, 19 August (2008).

Dawbarn, 1963: B. Dawbarn, 'Can all festivals make money?', *Melody Maker*, 1 June (1963), p. 2.

Field, 2004: Shelly Field, *Career Opportunities in the Music Industry, 5th Edn*. (New York: Checkmark, 2004).

Finnegan, 1989: Ruth Finnegan, *The hidden musicians: music-making in an English town*, 2nd edn, Music/Culture series, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

Frith, 2007: Simon Frith, 'Live Music Matters', *Scottish Music Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1-17.

Frith, Cloonan, and Williamson, 2009: Simon Frith, Martin Cloonan and John Williamson, 'On music as a creative industry', in Jeffs and Pratt (ed.) *Creativity and Innovation in the Culture Economy* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp.74-89.

'Future of Variety is Discussed by TUC – Gov't should help, says MU', *Melody Maker*, 10 September 1955, p. 1.

Godbolt, 1989: John Godbolt, *A History of Jazz in Britain: 1950-1970* (London: Quartet, 1989).

Goffman, 1990: Erving Goffman, *The presentation of self in everyday life*. (London: Penguin, 1990).

Hobson, 2008a: Mark Hobson, Interview with Emma Webster in Sheffield, 21 August (2008).

Hobson, 2008b: Mark Hobson, Email correspondence with Emma Webster, 4 November (2008).

Jenner, 2008: Pete Jenner, Interview with Matt Brennan in London, 11 November (2008).

'Jerry Lee in 35-town tour', *Melody Maker*, 5 April 1958, p. 16.

Jones, 1962: M. Jones, 'Fewer U.S faces fit the bill today', *Melody Maker*, 6 January (1962), p. 7.

'Kenton For Britain: Ted Heath For U.S. Concert Tour', *Melody Maker*, 15 October 1955, p. 1.

Krueger, 2005: Alan Krueger, 'The Economics of Real Superstars: The Market for Rock Concerts in the Material World', *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 23, no. 1, (2005), pp. 1-30.

Laing, 2003: Dave Laing, 'Promoter', in Shepherd et al (ed.) *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*. (London: Continuum, 2003).

Latham, 2009: Paul Latham, Interview with Matt Brennan in London, 3 June (2009).

'Letter – Thank you, Harold Fielding', *Melody Maker*, 2 February 1957, p. 4.

Live Nation, 2007: Live Nation, *Live Nation Annual Report 2007*, http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/irol/19/194146/AR/2007_Annual_Report.pdf

Live Nation, 2008a: Live Nation, *Live Nation Second Quarter Report 2008*, http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/irol/19/194146/supp/Second_Quarter_2008_Supplemental_Operational_and_Financial_Information.pdf

Live Nation Annual Report. 2008b. <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/External.File?item=UGFyZW50SUQ9OTYxMHxDaGlsZEIEPS0xfFR5cGU9Mw==&t=1>

MacDonald, 2005: Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head* (London: Pimlico, 2005).

Mackie, 2008: Mark Mackie, Interview with Emma Webster in Edinburgh, 1 July (2008).

Mander, and Mitchenson, 1974: Raymond Mander and Joe Richardson, *British Music Hall* (London: Gentry Books, 1974).

Masson, 2010: Gordon Masson, 'Live Nation Ticketmaster merger wins approval – again', *Music Week*, 7 May (2010). <http://www.musicweek.com/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=1041067&c=1>

McKay, 2005: George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

McNab, 2008: Ken McNab, *The Beatles in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008).

'Michael Cohl Walks and Talks in new Live Nation Deal', *FYI Music News*, 21 June 2008, <http://fyimusic.ca/industry-news/michael-cohl-walks-but-talks-in-new-live-nation-deal>

'Millermen for new R&B Club', *Melody Maker*, 24 September 1960, p. 20.

'More dates for Rock 'n' Trad bill', *Melody Maker*, 22 October 1960, p. 24.

'MU Will Oppose Tatum Shows Here', *Melody Maker*, 18 June 1955, p. 16.

Music Managers Forum, 2003: *Music Managers Forum, The Music Management Bible*. (London: SMT, 2003).

National Music Council, 2002: *National Music Council, Counting the Notes*, (2002). http://www.musiced.org.uk/features/counting_the_notes.pdf

Negus, 1992: Keith Negus, *Producing Pop: Culture and Conflict in the Popular Music Industry* (London: Arnold, 1992).

Negus, 2002: Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory, 2nd edition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

'New club to feature jazz and cabaret', *Melody Maker*, 18 June 1955, p. 16.

'No more palais jazz for Hammersmith', *Melody Maker*, 26 May 1962, p. 5.

'No more U.S. bands says Dutch Promoter', *Melody Maker*, 1 January 1955, p. 7.

'Northern promoters attack pop groups' *Melody Maker*, 17 September 1966, p. 25.

'Obituary: Harold Fielding', *The Telegraph*, 30 September 2003, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1442890/Harold-Fielding.html>

Passman, 2004: Donald S. Passman, *All You Need to Know about the Music Business* (London: Penguin, 2004) .

Payne, 1956: J. Payne, 'Variety Needs a Wash and Brush-up', *Melody Maker*, 15 December (1956) p. 7.

Pearce, 2008: Hayley Pearce, Interview with Emma Webster in Bristol, 24 November (2008).

'Police prepare for big Cliff and Shadows tour', *Melody Maker*, 27 January 1962, p. 16.

Prynn, 2008: Jonathan Prynn: 'Festival explosion turns live music into £1.9bn big business', *Evening Standard*, 10 September (2008). <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23553561-details/Festival+explosion+turns+live+music+into+1.9bn+big+business/article.do>

Razor, 2008: Ralph Razor, Interview with Emma Webster in Sheffield, 19 August (2008).

Reynolds, 2008: Andy Reynolds, *The Tour Book: How to Get Your Music on the Road*. (Boston, MA: Thomson Course Technology, 2008).

Richards, 1955: D. Richards, 'A Handful of Singers Won't Save Variety', *Melody Maker*, 12 February (1955), p.17.

'Show and Film Reviews', *Melody Maker*, 29 September 1956, p. 8.

'Stones States gates dismal', *Melody Maker*, 16 July 1966, p. 6.

'Time to move on from the ballrooms', *Melody Maker*, 8 January 1966, p. 3.

'UK live revenues surpass record sales', *Music Week*, 17 March 2009, <http://www.musicweek.com/story.asp?storycode=1037247>

'Variety in Westminster', *Melody Maker*, 26 February 1955, p. 15.

'Walkers quit the ballroom scene', *Melody Maker*, 9 October 1965, p. 4.

'Well – what is R&B?', *Melody Maker*, 30 March 1963, p. 6.

'Who would be a promoter?', *Melody Maker*, 28 January 1967, p. 8.

Williamson, and Cloonan, 2007: John Williamson and Martin Cloonan, 'Rethinking the Music Industry', *Popular Music*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2007), pp. 305-322.

Wilson, 2008: Chris Wilson, Interview with Emma Webster in Sheffield, 21 August (2008).

Youngs, 2009: Ian Youngs, 'How to fix the music industry', *BBC Online*, 22 January (2009), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7842079.stm>

Biographical Note

Dr Matt Brennan, University of Edinburgh

Matt Brennan is a post-doctoral researcher in music at the University of Edinburgh, working on an AHRC-funded project: The Promotion of Live Music in the UK: an Historical, Cultural and Institutional Analysis. He completed his PhD at the University of Stirling, where he researched the interactions between American jazz and rock journalism. He has published articles on the music press in journals such as *Popular Music*, *Popular Music History*, and the *Jazz Research Journal*. He has performed in numerous bands and ensembles in Canada and Scotland, and currently plays in the Glasgow-based band, Zoey Van Goey. For the live music project, Matt is primarily responsible for library and archival research.

Emma Webster, University of Glasgow

Emma Webster is a PhD student in Music at the University of Glasgow. She received her Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Sheffield, and before returning to academia, Emma spent eight years working in music in a variety of guises and music genres, including opera, 'world music', acid techno, and digital distribution. For the AHRC-funded project, The Promotion of Live Music in the UK: an Historical, Cultural and Institutional Analysis, Emma is primarily responsible for ethnographic research into local live music scenes.